

#### African American Inventors

Elijah McCoy (1843-1929) is credited with over 50 inventions during his career. In an effort to improve efficiency and eliminate the frequent stopping necessary for lubrication of trains, McCoy devised a method of automating the task. In 1872 he developed a “lubricating cup” that could automatically drip oil when and where needed — vital in avoiding sticking to the track. The lubricating cup met with enormous success and orders for it came in from railroad companies all over the country. It was so popular that when other inventors attempted to steal his idea and sell their own versions of the device, companies were not fooled. They insisted on the authentic device, calling it “the Real McCoy.”

Garrett Morgan (1877-1963) Inventor of the Gas mask and traffic signal.

Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999) Inventor of the first closed-circuit security system.

Otis Boykin (1920-1982) Inventor of the pacemaker and the IBM computer.

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## Black History Month

### National African American History Month

Black History Month, also known as National African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role they have played in our nation's history.

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. Few could have imagined African Americans' future contributions to education that would be recognized by the global community.

The annual celebration of Black Americans' achievements is credited to Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

Known as “The Father of Black History,” Woodson dedicated his life and career to the field of African-American history and lobbied extensively to establish Black History Month as a nationwide institution.

In 1915, he established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Woodson wanted to change the world's perception of African Americans and recognize their contributions to American society and culture.

He selected the second week of February because it fell between the birthdays of the famed orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass and

President Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, the celebration expanded to include the entire month.

It was his efforts and those of other champions who broke down daunting barriers, finally allowing African Americans to participate as American citizens and have their stories told.

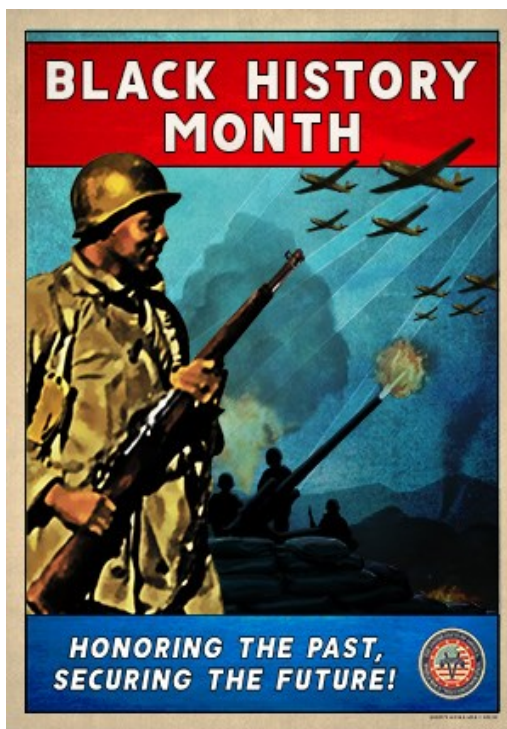
Dr. Woodson's concept has given a profound sense of dignity to all Black Americans.

Subsequently, innumerable African Americans have seized previously unavailable opportunities to contribute to American culture and heroically defend their country during wartime.

A century later, the valuable contributions of African Americans cannot be denied. Their profound impact on America continues in a myriad of areas, including history,

education, entertainment, literature, science, sports, politics, culture, and the military.

Please join DLA Distribution as we celebrate National Black History Month.





DLA Distribution Brig. Gen. Keith D. Reventlow United States Marine Corps  
Commanding General

*“A man without knowledge  
of himself and his heritage  
is like a tree without  
roots.” —  
American comedian  
Dick Gregory*



Private First Class Howard P. Perry.  
The first Black American to enlist in  
the Marine Corps in 1942.

## Commanding General's Comments

The observance of National African American/Black History Month celebrates African Americans' contributions to our nation.

We celebrate the culture and heritage of remarkable men and women who forever changed the course of history and redefined the United States military during this month.

Black soldiers had fought in the Revolutionary War and unofficially in 1812, but state militias had excluded African Americans since 1792. After two grueling years of the Civil War, The Second Confiscation and Militia Act of July 17, 1862, was the first step toward African Americans' enlistment in the Union Army.

Early in February 1863, the abolitionist Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts issued the Civil War's first

official call for Black soldiers. More than 1,000 men responded and formed the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, the first Black regiment to be raised in the North.

Many of the 54th soldiers were not from Massachusetts: one-quarter came from slave states, and some came from as far away as Canada and the Caribbean. The 54th Massachusetts stormed Fort Wagner, which guarded Charleston's Port in South Carolina. It was the first time in the Civil War that Black troops led an infantry attack.

In 1948, President Harry Truman enacted Executive Order Number 9981, which directed equality of treatment and opportunity in all United States Military. This order, in time, led to the end of racial segregation in the military

forces.

During World War Two, The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-American military aviators in the United States Armed Forces. They flew over 200 combat missions in World War II and lost none of their own to enemy fire.

Their second-to-none fighting record was instrumental in burying myths about correlations concerning race and combat skills. It paved the way to the full integration of the U.S. military we have today. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were over 2 million Black military veterans in the United States nationwide in 2019.

Not only is African American History Month a time to reflect on our nation's history and progress, but it is also a time to recommit to advancing equal opportunity for all.

## A History of Inspiration

One cannot tell the story of America without preserving and reflecting on the places where African Americans have made history.

The history of African Americans unfolds across the canvas of America, beginning before the arrival of the Mayflower and continuing to the present.

From port cities where Africans disembarked from slave ships to the battle fields where their descendants fought for freedom, from the colleges and universities where they pursued

education to places where they created communities during centuries of migration, the imprint of Americans of African descent is deeply embedded in the narrative of the American past.

As with all cultures, there will always exist a need to draw inspiration and guidance from the past. And through that inspiration, people will find tools and paths that will help them live their lives.

It is difficult to resist being inspired by Howard P. Perry, the first Black American to

enlist in the Marine Corps in 1942.

It is difficult to resist being galvanized by the “Golden Thirteen”, The 12 Black American commissioned officers, and a warrant officer commissioned by the Navy in 1944.

It is difficult to resist being energized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s oratory, commitment to racial justice, and his ultimate sacrifice. There is no more powerful force than a people steeped in their history.



## African Americans During the Civil War



*"One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings."* –

*American businessman  
Franklin A. Thomas*



Henry O. Flipper,  
The first Black Graduate of  
West Point

Over the course of the Civil War, the four million people of African descent in the United States rallied around the Union flag in the cause of freedom.

From the towns and cities of the North, to the cotton and tobacco fields of the South, approximately 200,000 enlisted in the Grand Army of the Republic to destroy the Confederacy.

Black Americans served as soldiers, spies, nurses and recruiters. Enduring unequal treatment, massacres and riots, they pursued the quest for freedom and equality.

Serving in the military is a difficult endeavor for all patriots regardless of race, sex, color, religion and national origin. It is why we honor our

veteran's service to our country.

Black soldiers faced discrimination from the beginning, serving under White officers and in segregated units. There was hostility, and even violence, perpetrated by Whites even though these soldiers were fighting for the Union.

Black soldiers were paid less and oftentimes not well armed as their White counterparts. Instead of guns some were armed with picks and axes.

The Bureau of Colored Troops was established by the War Department in 1863. Enlistment of Black men in the Union Army was crucial to both the perception of the Black man as a soldier and the outcome of the war.

Once Black men were accepted as soldiers, the Civil War was no longer the "White man's war".

By the end of the Civil War, approximately 179,000 Black men (10% of the Union Army) had served in the Army, and 19,000 in the Navy.

Nearly 40,000 Black soldiers died over the course of the war. There were nearly 80 Black commissioned officers.

Black women, who could not formally join the Army, nonetheless served as nurses, spies and scouts.

Their record of service speaks for itself.

## The First Black Graduate of West Point

Henry Ossian Flipper, born into slavery on March 21, 1856, was appointed to the United States Military Academy in 1873.

Over the next four years he overcame harassment, isolation, and insults to become West Point's first African-American graduate—and commissioned officer—in the regular U.S. Army.

Flipper was first stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, later served at Forts Elliott, Quitman, and Davis, Texas. He served as a signal officer and quartermaster, fought Apaches, installed telegraph lines, and supervised the building of roads.

At Fort Sill, the young lieutenant directed the construction of a drainage system that helped prevent the spread of malaria. Still known as "Flipper's Ditch," the ditch—commemorated by a bronze marker at Fort Sill—is listed as a National Historic Landmark.

In 1881, while serving at Fort

Davis, Flipper's commanding officer accused him of embezzling money from commissary funds. A court-martial found him not guilty of embezzlement, but convicted him of conduct unbecoming an officer and ordered him dismissed from the Army.

As a civilian, Henry Flipper went on to distinguish himself in a variety of governmental and private engineering positions. These included serving as surveyor, civil and military engineer, author, translator, special agent of the Justice Department, special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior with the Alaskan Engineering Commission, aide to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, as well as an authority on Mexican land and mining law.

He wrote and published several works. His first publication was an autobiography, *The Colored Cadet at West Point* (New York: Lee, 1878; reprint, New York: Arno, 1898). His memoirs, *Black Frontiersman: The Memoirs of Henry O.*

Flipper, first Black Graduate of West Point (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1997) were compiled and edited with introduction and notes by Theodore D. Harris. His other works include *Spanish and Mexican Land Laws: New Spain and Mexico for the Department of Justice* in 1895

Throughout the balance of his life, Henry Flipper maintained that he was innocent of the charges that resulted in his court-martial and dismissal from the Army and made numerous attempts to have his conviction reversed. He died in Georgia in 1940.

In 1976, thirty-six years after his death, the U.S. Army reviewed his case and posthumously awarded Flipper an honorable discharge dated June 30, 1882.

President Bill Clinton pardoned Flipper in 1999; this was the final act of vindication of Flipper's military service, and acknowledged the racism he had endured.



## African-Americans In Combat

African-Americans have fought for the United States throughout its history, defending and serving a country that in turn denied them their basic rights as citizens.

Despite policies of racial segregation and discrimination, African-American soldiers played a significant role from the colonial period to the Korean War. It wasn't until the middle of the 20th century that African-American soldiers began to receive the recognition and equality they deserved.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by World War I, and thousands of African-Americans rushed to register for the draft. Their enthusiasm stemmed in part to defend liberty and democracy in Europe, but also from the opportunity it gave them to prove that they deserved greater rights at home.

Their enlistment rate was high, as was their desire to serve on the front lines. However military leaders believed that African-Americans did not have the physical, mental or moral character to withstand warfare and they were commonly relegated to labor-intensive service positions. The majority saw little combat.

Still, worthy contributions were made to America's war effort and one outstanding example was the 369th Infantry Regiment (known as the "Harlem Hellfighters") which served on the front lines for six

months, longer than any other American unit in the war and made notable due to the fact that they had received less training.

During this time the unit never lost any prisoners or territory to the enemy. France awarded the entire unit with Croix de Guerre, that country's highest military honor and 171 members of the regiment were awarded the Legion of Merit.

In the lead up to and during World War II the military establishment continued to maintain that African-Americans soldiers were not as capable as their white counterparts and needed more intensive leadership. Despite the continuing discrimination, more than a million African-Americans volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces in the fight against Hitler.

As the war progressed attitudes began to slowly change. Some African-Americans were trained in elite positions never offered previously, such as the Air Force, and some units were desegregated for the first time at the Battle of the Bulge.

In just a few years the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard made significant advancements in the treatment of their African-American personnel.

World War II was a watershed for race relations within the Armed Forces, and it marked the beginning of the end for racial separation within military units. In 1948 with the demand for civil rights mounting, President Harry S. Truman

ordered desegregation of the Armed Services and equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. Reform was slow, however, and it wasn't until 1953 that segregation officially ended when the Secretary of Defense announced that the last all-black unit had been abolished.

The Korean War put this new policy to the test. African-Americans served in all combat service elements alongside their white counterparts and were involved in all major combat operations, including the advance of United Nations Forces to the Chinese border. Two African-American Army sergeants, Cornelius H. Charlton and William Thompson, earned the Medal of Honor.

The Vietnam War saw the highest proportion of African-Americans ever to serve in an American war. There was a marked turnaround from the attitude in previous wars that black men were not fit for combat. The Vietnam War African-Americans faced a much greater chance of being on the front-line, and consequently a much higher casualty rate. In 1965 alone African-Americans represented almost 25 percent of those killed in action.

Following the Vietnam War, African-Americans account for nearly 25% of all enlisted Army soldiers while making up just 13% of the population.




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*"We must never forget that Black History is American History. The achievements of African Americans have contributed to our nation's greatness." —*  
*U.S. Representative Yvette Clark*

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General Colin Luther Powell  
 First African American Chairman of the  
 Joint Chiefs of Staff and the first African  
 American Secretary of State.

## Dr. Carter G. Woodson

Carter G. Woodson was born in New Canton, Buckingham County, Virginia, to former slaves Anne Eliza (Riddle) and James Henry Woodson.

Although his parents could neither read nor write, Carter G. Woodson credits his father for influencing the course of his life. His father, he later wrote, insisted that “learning to accept insult, to compromise on principle, to mislead your fellow man, or to betray your people, is to lose your soul.”

As one of a large and poor family, young Carter G. Woodson was brought up without the “ordinary comforts of life.” He was not able to attend school during much of

its five-month term because helping on the farm took priority over a formal education.

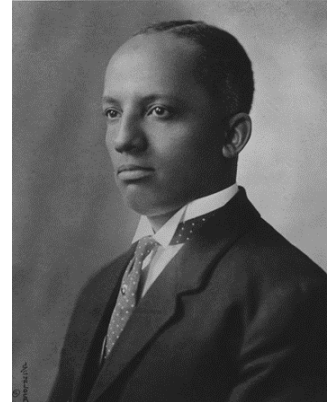
However, Carter was forced to earn his living as a miner in Fayette County coal fields and was able to devote only a few months each year to his schooling. In 1895, a twenty-year-old Carter entered Douglass High School, where he received his diploma in less than two years.

In 1908, he received his M.A. from the University of Chicago, and in 1912, he received his Ph.D. in history from Harvard University. During his lifetime, Dr. Woodson developed an

important philosophy of history. History, he insisted, was not the mere gathering of facts. The object of historical study is to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the facts.

History is more than political and military records of peoples and nations. It must include some description of the social conditions of the period being studied.

Woodson said, “We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.”



Dr. Carter G. Woodson

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*“We have a wonderful history behind us...and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements.” — Dr. Carter G. Woodson*

## Resources

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>  
<http://www.biography.com/>  
<http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline.html>  
<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>  
<http://www.archives.gov/research/aic/reference/black-history.html>  
<https://www.naap.org/naap-history-carter-g-woodson/>  
<https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/african-americans-in-combat/>  
 All photographs are public domain and are from the resources, listed above

## Observances

Third Monday of January - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

February - African American/Black History Month

March - Women's History Month

April - Holocaust Remembrance Day/Days of Remembrance

May - Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

26 August - Women's Equality Day

15 September to 15 October - National Hispanic Heritage Month

October - National Disability Employment Awareness Month

November - National American Indian Heritage Month

## Equal Employment Opportunity & Diversity

### Vision

Ensure consistent programs of equality, diversity and inclusion for all employees that empower the workforce to achieve their full potential and unify the workforce to achieve the mission.

### Mission

Create a collaborative culture where the empowerment of a diverse workforce bolsters individual and organizational growth.

Assist individual and organizational resiliency through programs and initiatives that attract, recruit, develop and retain the best talent as a mission necessity.

Respond to all EEO complaints with the utmost respect ensuring confidentiality, neutrality, and adherence to prescribed regulatory guidance.

Enhance education and awareness training efforts to promote a workplace free of unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or reprisal for personnel engaging in EEO protected activity.

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### The Golden Thirteen

Top row: John Walter Reagan, Jesse Walter Arbor, Dalton Louis Baugh, Frank Ellis

Sublett. Middle row: Graham Edward Martin Charles Byrd Lear, Phillip George Barnes, Reginald E. Goodwin.

Bottom row: James Edward Hair, Samuel Edward Barnes, George Clinton Cooper, William Sylvester White, Dennis Denmark Nelson.